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St. John Lutheran Church

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Buck Creek
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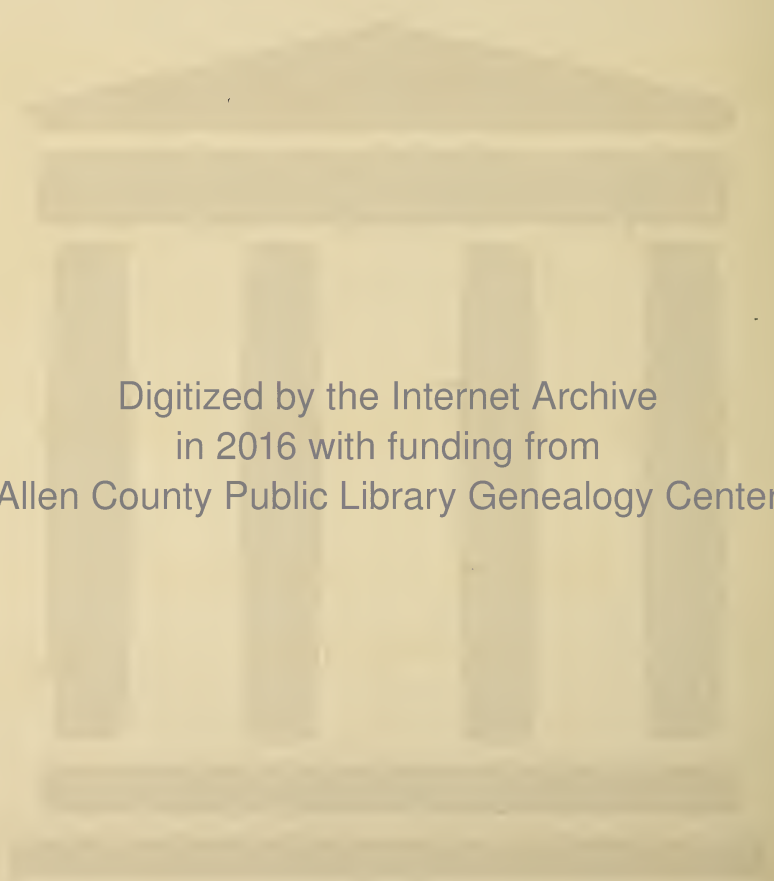
Sumner Iowa



Diamond Jubilee

1875 - 1950





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Mr. George Buchanan Sumner, Iowa.

Anniversary Booklet

Commemorating

the

Seventy-fifth Anniversary

St. John Lutheran Church

(A. L. C.)

Buck Creek, Sumner, Iowa

Leo Widdel, Pastor

COMPILED BY COMMITTEE:

Gottlieb Judisch, Herbert Judisch, Herbert Seehase,
Herman Zell and the Pastor.

Our Church . . .



"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

Forward . . .

Although this booklet cannot give a full detailed account of every happening in the life's period of our congregation, it seeks to present the most important phases of history as they joined themselves together in the shaping of and the consummation of the visions of those who love the "Walls of Zion."

It is with deep respect, that we dedicate this booklet to the memory of the labors and sacrifices of love of those, who under God's grace, made the establishment and continuation of this St. John congregation possible.

May she continue as the guide post of Life, pointing and leading weary souls to Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Soli Deo
Gloria



Our Church, the old school, and old parsonage.
Prior to 1914



This, our beautiful property today.

Our Church - 1925

It stands deep down in the valley
Half hidden by maple trees
That glow red and gold in autumn
And whisper in the breeze.

Nearby a little streamlet
Slow winds, as if to stay
And worship with the faithful
That come to our church to pray.

And close by in its shadow
Where pines the vigil keep
There is a quiet garden
Where weary pilgrims sleep.

The sunlight streams thru its windows,
(there is no stained glass there)
And touches the head of the worshipper
Reverently bowed, in prayer.

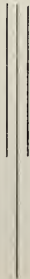
You might not call it beautiful—
But to us it is most fair,
We view it with deep reverence,
For we know our God is there.

Here, they who thirst for righteousness
Come, and their thirst is stilled,
And they who hunger for their God
Find here their want is filled.

Here, burdens great are cast away,
The weary here find rest,
Here strength is given to fainting souls,
And believing hearts are blest.

Father in Heaven, look with favor
On this Thy church, below,
And keep us in our humble way,
To make Thy kingdom grow.

—Mrs. Aug. A. Buhr



Our Church - 1950

We remodeled our church in the valley—
It stands there, shining and new.
Lock with favor on our labor, Oh Father,
(“Have you remodeled your sinful lives, too?”)

We grubbed out the ragged old maples,
And planted young pines for a start,
That Thy house might have the right setting,
(“Have you grubbed the evil out of your heart?”)

We rebuilt the old church organ—
It squeaked on cold, damp days—
Now it's tones are full and majestic—
(“Do you lift up your voice in my praise?”)

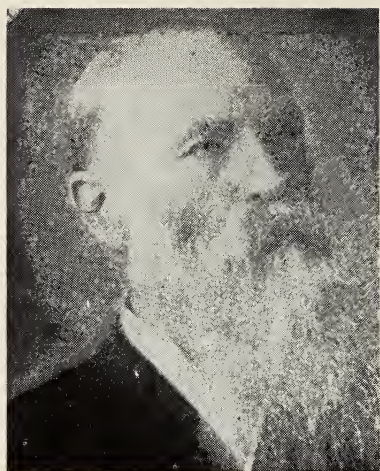
We put in new stained glass windows—
That we might worship Thee in quiet, apart,
(“And have you then also, my Children,
Shut out the world from your heart?”)

We strengthened the church's foundation,
And built a church parlor all new—
(“And have you asked my Holy Spirit
That He strengthen your faith in Me, too?”)

Our prideful boasting, O God forgive—
Send us Thy Holy Spirit that He,
May remodel our lives and cleanse our hearts
That they too, may be pleasing to Thee.

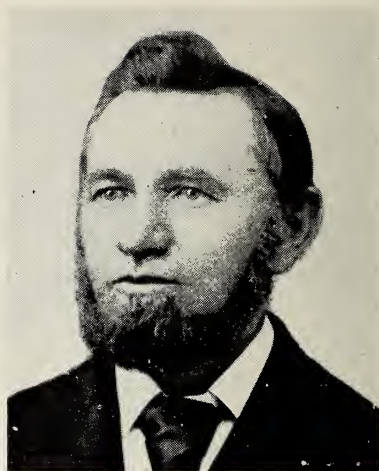
—Mrs. Aug. A. Buhr

Our Pastors . . .



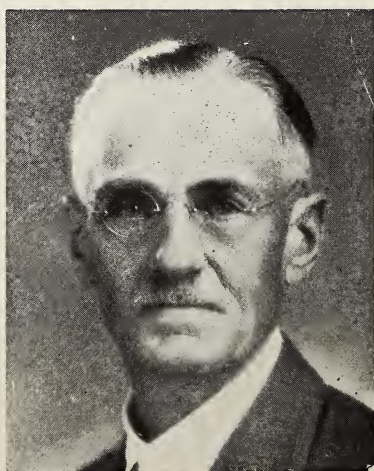
PASTOR P. BREDOW

1873 - 1875



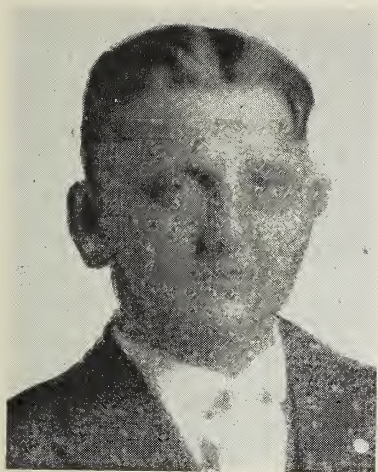
PASTOR WM. ADIX, SR.

1875 - 1898



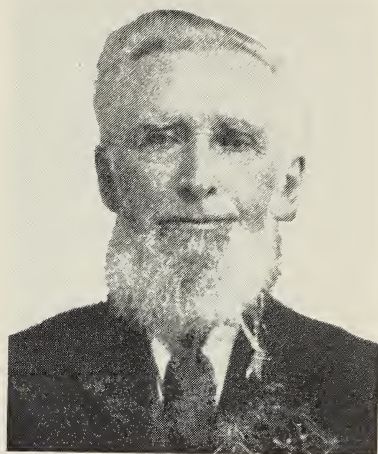
PASTOR F. SCHEDTLER

1898 - 1913



PASTOR H. L. ADIX

1913 - 1926



PASTOR J. GRAENING

1926 - 1927



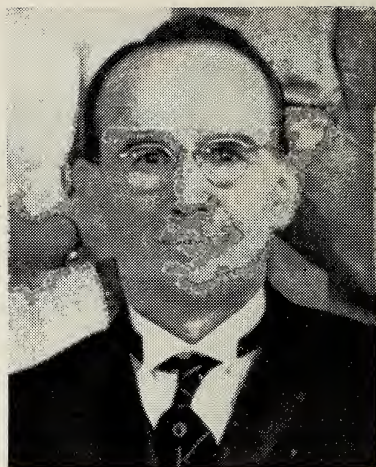
PASTOR H. KUHLMANN

1927 - 1935



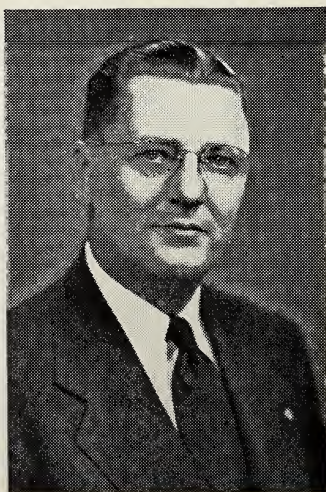
PASTOR G. S. KUHLMANN

1935 - 1945



PASTOR A. J. LECHNER

1945 - 1949



PASTOR LEO WIDDEL

1949 -

A Historical Sketch of this, Our Congregation

History is valuable, not from the standpoint of its value to the spiritual wellbeing of the soul, but from the standpoint of evaluating the high regard that God holds over against men, women, and children, in that He can use them in the upbuilding of His Kingdom here on earth. For that reason we here peer into the pages of the past, to gaze in admiration upon those who pioneered in the establishing of this congregation, to see the Hand of God guiding in the building of the Walls of Zion in Buck Creek, to utter with the Psalmist, "Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in the firmament of His power. Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness".

Early Beginnings under Pastor P. Bredow

The value of this congregation becomes ever greater in our midst when we consider the struggle which she of necessity had to engage upon in order to become a reality.

A contingent of German emigrants, having left their homeland in Mecklenburg, Germany, had established their new home in the Buck Creek community. The first attempts to reach them in a spiritual way, were made by a pastor of the Reformed Church. He however terminated his services here shortly, with a promise that he would secure a successor to carry on his work. For some unknown reason, he was not able to keep his promise. The Lord however in the meantime inspired Pastor Paul Bredow, of Maxfield, to come into these parts to conduct Lutheran Worship services. He made a call within a home and announced that on Sexigesima Sunday, 1873 he would conduct a service in the Marsh school house, located one mile south and one mile west of Buck Creek.

Altho the attendance was small, he announced at the close of Services, that in two weeks he would return the 10 miles to conduct another service. He continued this practice for one year, weather and road conditions permitting. It however appeared that the formulation of a congregation here should not meet with too peaceful an atmosphere, for to his great surprise, he learned one week that a pastor of a sister synod had announced services for the same time in the same school building. It was then that Pastor Bredow took his little flock to the Sell school house, located $\frac{1}{4}$ mile west of the present Dayton Center school. Here he then continued serving, learning in the meantime that the group in the Marsh school had already purchased materials with which to build a church. A. Mr. M. deeply concerned about the developments, made it his duty to call upon all Lutheran families in the community and called for a joint meeting

of all interested, which meeting should be conducted in the Marsh school, at which time it should be determined as to which Synod should serve the entire community. It was stipulated that neither pastor be present at this meeting. However the pastor of the south group failed to respect the wishes of the group and made his appearance at the meeting, and sought to make his appearance felt in that he gave definite instructions as to how the joint meeting should cast its vote. Perhaps his presence and attitude entered into the resultant outcome of the ballots cast. After thorough counting of members present, and ballots cast, the ballot count was taken, with the result that the decision was made, by a majority of two ballots, to be served by a Pastor of the Iowa Synod. After a severe reprimand, having been administered by him, the pastor left the meeting, not to return again.

Pastor Bredow then gathered the combined flock about himself to hold services regularly every two weeks in the Sell school. We of the present day can hardly evaluate the hardships, trials and disillusionments encountered by him in his venture. The trip entailed a 26 miles round trip journey via horse every two weeks.

In the fall of 1874 he felt that the time was ripe to organize a congregation. Articles of Incorporation were drawn, and land was donated by Mr. Louis Buhr for a church site for this new congregation. The congregation however did not deem it wise to erect a House of Worship until she could have the full time services of a resident pastor.

Pastor Wm. Adix, First Resident Pastor

Such a man was to be found in Candidate Wm. Adix of Wartburg Theological Seminary, whose birthplace also was Mecklenburg, Germany, who arrived at the Bredow parsonage in Maxfield in Feb. 1875. Thus Buck Creek was to have the services of its own candidate pastor, who would ride here on horseback every two weeks. After a Constitution was drawn up and signed by three families, a Call was extended to Candidate Adix at a salary of \$250.00 per year. This he accepted and was ordained and installed by Pastor Bredow on Cantate Sunday 1875. He then made his home in the small Carl Sell residence where he had the facilities of a room 8-10 feet, set off from the other rooms by a curtain. Herein he had his living quarters, bed room and study. Plans were immediately made to erect a parsonage and a church. The church was completed by late summer, an unpretentious building, simple yet churchly and appropriate, 40 feet long, and 30 feet wide, without steeple or bell. Dedication services were held on the 21st Sunday after Trinity 1875, and consisted in a Farewell Service in the Sell school house by Pastor Blessin of

Crane Creek, and an entrance into and dedication service for the new church under the leadership of Pastor Adix and President Grossman, who preached the dedicatory sermon. 14 families now made up the membership of the congregation, altho 20 families took part in the service. Feelings of joy ran high, for now this young congregation had its own house of Worship, where it could receive the Means of Grace in the Beauty of Holiness.

Next the parsonage was built, and completed in Nov. 1875, a building 16 by 20, with 8 foot ceiling, without paint or chimney. An opening in the roof served as smoke exhaust. Part of the new parsonage was immediately given over to school usage, which did not allow for bedroom facilities, so the parsonage family spread straw ticks on the floor for sleeping. Meals could not be prepared by Mrs. Adix until after school had been dismissed. Thus were the beginnings also of the Christian Day School here in Buck Creek.

Like the mighty stalwart Oak tree, spreading its shapely branches in all directions, so St. John congregation also enjoyed a sound, steady growth, so that by 1891 it became necessary to enlarge the church. An additional 24 feet of building were joined onto the west end of the church, plus a tower of approximately 90 feet in height, and the suspension of the bell therein, whose peal has called the worshippers together these many years and has solemnly tolled when little feet as well as when weary travelers have been laid to rest in God's Acre. The enlarged church was rededicated on Nov. 7, 1891. Shortly prior to this time a school had also been built to the north of the church, to better facilitate the religious educational program of the church. A post office was also incorporated therein for a number of years. The parsonage also was in need of further expanding, therefore two additional rooms were added, the one measuring 16 by 24 feet, the other 16 by 20 feet. Having concluded 23 years of fruitful and consecrated labors here, Pastor Adix followed the call to Andrew, Iowa, to serve in the capacity of Orphanage Superintendent. Amid tears of regret at his leaving, yet with wellwishes, he took leave of this congregation and entered his new field of labor.

Pastor F. Schedtler

Thus was turned a page of the early history of the congregation. The following pages of history are yet rather fresh in the memory of many of the constituency of the congregation, hence we shall not go so much in detail, but shall seek to point out the highlights and blessings received through each pastorate.

Pastor F. Schedtler of Bennington Township was next extended the Buck Creek Call and accepted, entering this field in Nov. 1898. Pastor Schedtler, in his labors here, gave evidence of the deep spirit-

uality that he possessed through the grace of God, and thereby built solidly upon the foundation, whose chief cornerstone is Jesus Christ. It was during his pastorate that the congregation felt the need of the erection of a shelter for its horses, that so faithfully brought them to worship Sunday after Sunday, so in 1899 a large stable was built, into which each could drive his team in inclement as well as good weather. This stable remained until but a few years ago, when through disuse, its shelter was no longer needed and it was removed. In the year 1900 the congregation had reached its first quarter century mark and wished to render praises to God for "His Goodness and Mercy" in that it observed its 25th Anniversary. To better facilitate the expression of its feelings, the congregation purchased and had installed, a pipe organ, for the sum of \$800.00. That organ still serves us today, altho it has been rebuilt and improved twice since then. With apostolic zeal and fervor, Pastor Schedtler sought the extension of God's Kingdom, and through his guidance a neighboring congregation was organized to the south of this vicinity, which is known as Grove Hill. In the year of 1912 Buck Creek was persuaded to no longer seek to function as an independent congregation, and thus affiliated itself with the former Iowa Synod. The following year, 1913, in October, Pastor Schedtler followed the Call extended to him by Hope congregation, Westgate, and thus terminated his services here, although the results of his faithful labors still give evidence today, in the lives of those who sat at his feet in school, and beneath his pulpit in worship.

Pastor H. L. Adix

The next servant of God to be called into this field, was a son of the founding pastor. Pastor H. L. Adix, also serving at Bennington, as did his predecessor, accepted the call and moved into this field of labor in the summer of 1913. For a little over 13 years he too labored zealously for the cause of Christ. By this time the enrollment in the Christian Day school had grown to such proportions, that it was deemed advisable to employ a full time teacher. Although a decision had been made in that direction a year earlier, it was not until Pastor Adix' pastorate that the resolution was carried to completion. At this same time it was also deemed necessary to enlarge the school facilities, therefore a new brick school house was erected on newly acquired land across the roadway from the church. This necessitated the expenditure of about \$4,000.00. By the year 1915 it became necessary to do interior renovation in the church. After pro and con debates, it was decided to at the same time excavate a basement under the entire church, and move the church back from the roadway a distance of 15 feet. A gasoline motor powered blower was also purchased and installed at this time for organ pumping usage. It should be mentioned here that at about this

time a Luther League was also organized among the youth of the congregation.

* With the coming of the first world's conflict, there began a period of disturbing incidences with respect to the matter of "the language question", which question was not to be settled until more than a quarter of a century later.

In 1918 the congregation erected the present beautiful and commodious parsonage, that has been a source of pride to the congregation ever since. Then followed the year 1925, the golden anniversary period in the history of the congregation. For the occasion a new fence, made of wrought iron, with imposing brick end and gate posts was erected along the front of the cemetery. When on June 21, 1925 the Anniversary was observed, the community received a rain of such proportion that it shall be remembered always by those who participated in the celebration. In Nov. 1926 Pastor Adix followed the Call extended to him by the congregation in Monticello, Iowa. Of his pastorate it too shall be stated, that he built and served well by God's grace.

Pastor J. Graening, em. Interim pastor

Pastor J. Graening, living in retirement in Waverly was now asked to serve this field in the period of vacancy. At first he did so, commuting from his home, but then moved for a few months into the parsonage. He served in full ministerial capacity here and was permitted to rejoice in confirming a fine class of Confirmands on Palm Sunday, 1927. The following Sunday, Easter, he terminated his services here, and turned the field of labor into the hands of Pastor H. Kuhlmann.

Pastor H. Kuhlmann

Pastor Kuhlman was likewise a student and a scholar, who could therefore properly employ his talents. Unfortunately during his pastorate, the nation plunged into its disturbing period of financial depression. Due to existing conditions nothing could be done to the physical properties of the congregation other than the installation of electrical lighting facilities. This however did not disturb the pastor. He kept himself busy with learning, and with strict indoctrination of his flock both in the church and in the school. The memories of this venerable man shall linger long in St. John. The infirmities of age however began showing their telling effects upon him, and in Jan. 1935, the reigns were placed into the able hands of his son, Pastor G. S. Kuhlmann.

Pastor G. S. Kuhlmann, Ph.D.

It became the privilege and task of the new young pastor to guide in the planning and preparing for the observance of the congregations 60th Anniversary, to be observed that same year. In preparation for that observance, the pews were rebuilt, whereby it became possible to have three aisles instead of the former two, so that hence there would be a possibility of bringing the body of a deceased one into the church for a funeral. The church was then also redecorated interiorly thru the application of Nu-wood and Cellotex. To make the occasion truly festive, the Kuhlman family donated the greater part of a new oak Altar and Pulpit, which today still grace our house of Worship. With the coming of better times, it was deemed adviseable and necessary to have needed improvements made on the organ, thus in 1937 a 2 manual electromatic action was added to replace the old single manual traxion action, that had proven rather troublesome. On Feb. 1, 1940 an incident flared up, that made the entire congregation fearful for a few anxious hours, when the school building was gutted completely by fire. The extent of damage however was limited only to the school, which was then rebuilt in the same year, the walls thereof having remained intact even though submitted to the intense heat.

Being a lover of music, the pastor called for volunteers, who would be interested in the formation of a Mens chorus. From untrained voices, through dilligent and patient practice, there emerged a chorus that gained rather marked reputation here and in the surrounding communities.

Pastor Kuhlman also noted the need for women's working in the Kingdom of God, hence he sought the organization of a Women's Missionary-Ladies Aid Society, which functions nobly also yet today. Of his labors it must also be said, that he labored faithfully, and with his scholarly presentations helped to mould the lives and souls of parishoners for a fitting adaptation into the Kingdom of God. In August, 1945, he followed the call extended to him by the St. Paul congregation of Des Moines, Iowa.

Pastor A. J. Lechner

Our Saviour experienced an incident in His life of Public Ministry when He was forced to ask "and will ye also go away?" It seems that every congregation must at some time or other have its period of mounting difficulties, which can be attributed to no one particular cause. Without anyone being aware of such a period, Pastor A. J. Lechner followed the call to come to Buck Creek, to find himself and congregation struggling for mastery of the situation. Perhaps it was the birthpain accompanying the transition from the old into the new. We like to think of it in this light. Pastor Lechner, sensing

the Hand of God in calling him into this field of labor, preached and taught the Word of God and administered the Sacraments faithfully, helping to lay the foundation for future planning. In 1946 the now unused stable was removed from the north property rights. In 1947 the congregation was officially reincorporated. Then came the time for planning for this festive occasion, the observance of the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the congregation. At the suggestion of the pastor, plans began to be made for a thorough renovation of the church together with an addition of 12 feet to be made to the east end and 4 feet to the west end, together with a deepening of the basement room and thorough remodeling of the same. At this time, June, 1949, Pastor Lechner followed the Call to Toluca, Ill., and left it to his successor to assist in the consummation of the plans made.

Pastor Leo Widdel

Then in July 1949, Pastor Leo Widdel accepted the Call extended to him, preaching his initial sermon on July 24. He found himself getting into the midst of the rebuilding program, and enjoyed mingling with and working together with the men, who came so faithfully day after day, lending their hand and equipment so that the project might become a reality. Today we rejoice in our completely renovated House of Worship, whose improvements have gone much beyond the original plans set up in the 1949 meeting. With pride we gaze upon the newly redecorated church interior, the new windows, carpeting, flooring, pews, Sacristy and Chancel, the rebuilt and relocated organ, and the nursery, together with a full basement with its new oil burning heating plant, kitchen, social and storage rooms, and lounges. In addition new siding on the church exterior, street lighting, sidewalks, landscaping, and many other details too numerous to mention.

It is true, these have meant the expenditure of a considerable sum, but in reality, it is but a partial acceptance of the responsibilities a loving God has placed upon us.

In September of last year, a Brotherhood society was organized within the congregation, and in the following month, October, our first Sunday School was organized, both instances finding quick and good response. In the regular annual meeting in January of this year, it was officially voted to discontinue the useage of the German language in worship services in view of the future generation that is rapidly making up the constituency of the congregation.

Thus we labor on, pastor and parishoners, not for man's, but for God's glory, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord, but that through His Grace in Christ Jesus, we might at life's close, receive from God's hand the gift of the Crown of Life that shall be ours to all eternity.

Nor would we wish to bring this to a close without a few words of recognition to the good parsonage wives, whose diligent labors and sacrifices have helped to make possible the bearing of the burdens of their pastor husbands, and the parsonage children, who have also contributed to the joyous workings of their pastor fathers.

The following official acts have been performed within our midst, to preserve unto us the Means of Grace.

Baptisms, 1055; Confirmations, 766; Weddings, 253; Funerals, 262; Ordinations 4.

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below; Praise Him above ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Amen.

Two native sons of the congregation have entered the ministry, Pastor George Krueger and Pastor Henry Knoploh.

Our School



It has been the heritage of our congregation to conduct the Parish school ever since the first days of her beginnings. It is interesting to note, that the enrollment reached as high as the seventy mark at one time. However since the educational requirements today are far different from the requirements of those days, it has become necessary to limit our enrollments to less than half that number. Since 1913 a full time teacher has been employed, whereas before that time, all education was given by the pastor.

School Board

Ted Hoppenworth	Arnold Judisch
Reinhard Judisch	Reinhard Tegtmeier

Our Teachers

Miss Clara Gattman	Miss Erna Graening
Miss Elizabeth Mutschmann	Miss Frieda Ottersberg
Miss Martha Wetterling	Miss Leona Bischoff
Miss Magdalene Geisendorfer	Miss Esther Karsten
Miss Emma Ottersberg	Miss Ruth Gehrecke
Miss Elsie Mueller	Mrs. Helen Seehase
Miss Lydia Adix	Mrs. Lydia Bonnell
Miss Lorraine Brueggeman	Miss Ramona Roessler
Miss Minnie Grauerholz	Mrs. Lowell Proehl

Our Sunday School



Sensing that the required curriculum of secular study was having its effect upon the religious education program of the congregation, it was deemed fitting and advisable to organize a Sunday School within the congregation to augment the working of our Parish school. Hence on Sunday, Oct. 2, 1949, our first Sunday School sessions were opened, with 125 present. We here deem it fitting to list those, who assumed the leadership.

Superintendent—Mr. Theodore Hoppenworth

Secretary—Mrs. Leo Widdel

Treasurer—Mrs. August A. Buhr

Teacher, Nursery Department—Miss Pauline Seehase

Teacher, Beginners Department—Miss Minerva Nuss

Teacher, Primary Department—Miss Ardeth Seehase

Teacher, Junior Department—Miss Elaine Knoploh

Teacher, Intermediate Department—Miss Dorothy Schneider

Teacher, Senior Department—Miss Jean Thurm

Teacher, Junior Bible Class—Mr. Herbert Seehase

Teacher, Adult Bible Class—Pastor Leo Widdel

Organist—Lorraine Schwan

Church Organist—Mrs. Arthur Herman

Luther League



Prior to the first global conflict, a group of the youth within the congregation was called together, with purpose in view of organizing a society for the youth, to be called the Wartburg League. For a time this organization functioned, largely as a social group, to find itself however disbanding with the coming of World War I. Ten years later, in 1927, reorganization efforts resulted in the establishment of the Luther League. Now in its third decade of existence, this organization is still a vital link in the life of our congregation, for our youth is the future church, growing from infancy into christian maturity.

Executive Committee

President—Lloyd Nuss

Secretary—Ardeth Seechase

Vice-President—Marvin Knoploh

Treasurer—Dorothy Schneider

Women's Missionary - Ladies Aid



Realizing that our Savior gave womankind equal rights in Kingdom work, an invitation was extended to the women of the congregation in 1937, to formulate a Women's Missionary—Ladies Aid Society. Although of rather unpretentious beginnings, with only seven members, the society has grown to a vigorous maturity, causing its labors of love to be felt here at home and into the outer reaches of the church. Zealously the individual members support the Mission Program of the American Lutheran Church, and in addition thereto, glorify Christ through their labors of love within the confines of the congregation and her House of Worship.

Executive Committee

Chairman—Miss Leona Bohle

Secretary—Mrs. Robert Judisch

Vice-President—Mrs. Emil Spier

Treasurer—Mrs. Herman Zell

The Brotherhood



While it is true that the burden of the responsibility of the church, particularly with respect to finances and decisions made, has always rested upon the men of the local congregations, nevertheless we felt that the scope of their activity should be broadened so that they might put their christianity to sound practical useage. Hence the Fall of 1949 witnessed the organization of a large, vigorous Brotherhood, whose members have adopted the Four-Fold Plan of Brotherhood functioning, namely Devotion, Education, Service and Fellowship.

Executive Committee

President—Mr. August A. Buhr

Secretary—Mr. Herman Zell

Vice-President—Mr. Elmer Schnadt

Treasurer—Mr. Erhardt Haar

Our Silent City



Every community must have a 'Silent City' where it may lay its weary ones to rest after they have been called to enter the Realms of Glory. Here too such an abode was plotted out on land donated by Mr. Wm. Buhr, Sr. Here lie the remains of those, who sacrificed and labored to make St. John congregation possible, including the sainted Pastor Wm. Adix, Sr. and his wife, and Pastor F. Schedtler and his wife. Here lie both young and old, redeemed by the blood of Christ, peacefully resting and awaiting the clarion call of the glorious Resurrection.

The Church Council



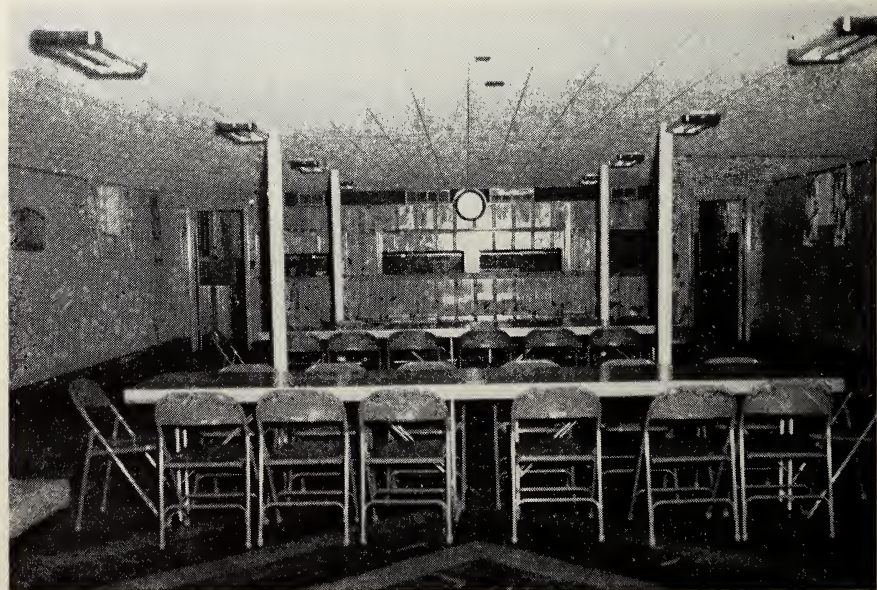
The Anniversary Committees



Church Chancel



Church Parlors



The Building Committee



The Parsonage



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